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Joyce Madison has seen her street in south Waukegan change for the worse over 58 years.

There are still hardworking families and some of the same old faces she has known for years. But more and more, she sees teens and young adults she doesn't know, hanging out at the corner of Lenox Avenue and May Street, selling drugs.

On Tuesday afternoon, however, the corner--which local police call an open-air drug market--was the backdrop for a scene that gives hope to Madison.

Waukegan police--joined by state Sen. Terry Link (D-Vernon Hills), U.S. Rep. Mark Kirk (R-Ill.) and Lake County State's Atty. Michael Waller--announced that a four-month drug operation in the neighborhood resulted in 31 arrests and netted about 8 pounds of marijuana, three-fourths of a pound of cocaine and two handguns.

From May to September, the department's Neighborhood Enforcement Team, with help from the federal Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives, did undercover drug buys and surveillance to identify dealers, police Chief William Biang said. In one instance, officers broke up a drug ring run from a public housing complex using high-tech listening devices and secret cameras, he said.

"We are obviously trying to get the information out to [the residents] that we're concerned about them, we're concerned about their neighborhoods and we're going to continue to support them," Biang said.

Of the 31 people arrested, most were from Waukegan, North Chicago and Zion, with a few from Chicago and Wisconsin. All were charged with possession of cannabis or a controlled substance with intent to deliver. Two men were also charged with unlawful use of a weapon by a felon.

Biang said about 25 of those arrested have known gang affiliations and most have criminal records. All were street-level dealers.

Waukegan Ald. Sam Cunningham, who grew up in and now represents the south end of the city, said ridding the streets of low-level drug dealers is a step in the right direction. But with more resources and better technology from state and federal authorities, local police will be better able to track and arrest those higher up the food chain.

"Street-level guys, they come dime-a-dozen; you're never going to get the big guys because they never show their faces," he said. "It's the [mid-level suppliers] that you're going to get."

Though there's more commotion on the block with recent drug busts, Madison is glad the police are trying to clean up her street.

"You've got to start somewhere," she said, "and you've got to do something."